



Hamilton Airport Advisory Board
August 12, 2008

Ravalli County Commissioners
215 South 4th Street
Hamilton, Montana

Chair Grandstaff:

Subject: Flatiron Ranch

The Airport Advisory Board is concerned about the proximity of the proposed Flatiron Ranch subdivision to the Ravalli County airport. It is imperative that the distances, elevations and density of this development be analyzed for compatibility with the current location of the runway and the future relocation of the runway. The objectives are to assure that the uses of the land are compatible with airport operations. It is necessary to protect and preserve the airport, the investment in the airport and prevent adjacent communities from noise impacts.

Residential development in close proximity to an airport is one of the most incompatible land uses. It is encroachment and places the airport at risk of future limitations. New residents move next to an airport knowing the airport exists but later organize to pressure elected officials to do something about the noisy airport. Many times elected officials decide to allow for the expansion of their tax base and overlook the negative impact to the airport.

When an airport owner accepts an AIP (Airport Improvement Projects) grant, it is required to follow grant assurances, or conditions, when accepting the grant. Grant Assurance #20 states that the airport owner will take appropriate measures to assure that airspace is protected for both instrument and visual approaches to the airport. The FAA has guidelines for approach/departure clear zones and densities of developments in those flight paths. Grant Assurance #21 deals with compatible land use and the ability of the airport owner to take appropriate action to restrict the use of land in the vicinity of the airport to activities and uses compatible with airport operations.

The Airport Board is not against the project but feel the proximity to the airport necessitates studying and answering the issues brought forth. Avigation easements and Real Estate Disclosure are two elements that must be included in the purchase contract and deed of any property sales with close proximity to the airport. The disclosure will give the location and the traffic patterns of the airport. The easement grants the right-of-flight and other restrictions necessary for the safe operation of the airport.

Montana Code Annotated – 2007 – section 67-7-102 finds that residential encroachment places the health, welfare and safety of the citizens in the air and on the ground at greater risk. It also increases the likelihood of legal action against local government. Ravalli County Airport has an Airport Affected Area map. If the Flatiron proposal falls within the boundaries of that map, then Montana Code Annotated has specific regulations when considering residential development within the boundaries of the Airport Affected Area.

Sincerely,

Dave Hedditch

President, Airport Advisory Board

cc: Hamilton City Mayor
cc: Hamilton Planning Board
cc: Commissioner Driscoll